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NETHERLANDS - HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION

A. POLICIES

1. The Netherlands government has no fixed policy regarding highway transport, although competition by highway carriers to the government-owned railroads is not encouraged. Statistics show, nevertheless, that about one-third of all freight moves by highway, about one-half by water, and the remainder, about 15 per cent, by rail. This lack of definite policy is due to the comparatively recent development of highway transport as an important medium of transport for passenger as well as for freight movements. It should be noted, however, that despite the present trend in road transport, there is considerable feeling in official and industrial circles that rails offer the best long-range solution to the nation's transport problems.
2. Responsibility for policies regarding road transport, like that for other media of transport, is vested in the Ministry of Transport, which allows considerable administrative freedom to each transport agency under its control. Coordination and control of road transport, however, is not effected to the high degree prevalent in rail and water transport.
3. Present government policy on highway transport is based primarily on the economic needs of the country, although strategic considerations may have a minor influence. The strategic significance of highways was vividly illustrated to the Netherlands in 1940 when the German army invaded the country by road. Another strategic aspect of the Netherlands highway system is its vulnerability, which is illustrated by a lack of bridges across its major water barriers.
4. The government does not subsidize road transport. It is interested, however, in the development of modern high-speed roads to replace the present system. Since 1932 the long-range "Government Road Plan" has operated toward that end.
5. State policy on highway transport has been influenced in the past by opposition of vested interests (the long established water carriers), but this opposition has declined in recent years.

B. ORGANIZATION

1. Road transport is under the direct authority of the Bureau of Roads, responsible to the Ministry of Transport through the Director General of Transportation, a war-time control agency dealing with transport reconstruction and rehabilitation. The Traffic Fund is an agency in the Ministry of Transport directly responsible for all transport revenue and expenditures.
2. The Bureau of Roads in the Ministry of Transport is organized into several offices, responsible for various aspects of highway transport such as rates, technical developments and

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inspection. Passenger and freight traffic problems are administered through separate divisions.

3. The Bureau of Roads is not related to the other Bureaus in the Ministry of Transport. Its activities are, however, coordinated by the Ministry in accordance with over-all transport policy.
4. Until a few years before World War I the control of road transport in the Netherlands was largely in the hands of local authorities. The years after World War I, however, saw a growing dependence upon highway transport and increasing competition between road and rail. The state, therefore, took action to bring road administration under the direction of the central government.
5. There appears to be general satisfaction with the Government's policy to rescue the road transport system from war-time disintegration. The highway carriers, however, do not like the fact that, under the present organization, highway tax revenues are being used to make up the deficits of the Netherlands Railway Company.

C. ADMINISTRATION

1. All projects for new transport routes must be approved by the Ministry of Transport and also by the Traffic Fund.
3. The government has a traditional policy of intervention to regulate competition in transportation, but natural economic forces have had probably equal influence in determining the final status of competition between transport media. The principal competition to highway transport comes from the rail carriers. This competition applies both to passenger and freight traffic. In the early days of rail development, there was considerable opposition on the part of the canal interests, but the problem has solved itself; the canals handle slow, bulky cargo, while railroads, (and recently, highway transport lines), concentrate upon speed and high-value, light-weight cargo, as well as passenger traffic. Coastal, ocean-going shipping and aviation offer little competition to highway transportation, and little has been done to regulate such competition.
4. The Government Traffic Bureau in the Ministry of Transport is responsible for the enforcement of safety regulations and inspection. As a matter of fact, there are virtually no laws covering vehicle inspection, overloading or safety regulations. This is partly the result of light highway traffic conditions together with the traditionally law abiding temperament of the Dutch people. A private organization, the Scientific Commercial Car Institute, has contracts to inspect and certify as to condition of trucks belonging to members of one of the large trucking associations.

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6. Although there is no recognized European organization dealing with international highway transport and traffic problems, efforts have been made to break down the existing barriers to free exchange of highway traffic. Some progress has been made in this respect and there are weekly bus services from the Netherlands to several neighboring countries. In May 1946, NIWO (Nederlandsche Internationale Wegvervoer Organisatie) was founded; (a) to promote cooperation among international transport interests; (b) to function as intermediary between authorities and transport interests, and (c) to supervise the activities of the highway transport carriers. The government has granted NIWO a "special status" in international freight operations. Members of NIWO include trucking companies, rail lines, Chambers of Commerce and shipping operators. It has obtained the cooperation of other states for the abolition of various restrictions on international traffic. Among its major accomplishments has been progress in achieving uniformity in international bills of lading.